



INSPIRE

On Leadership

Fall 2020

Leadership During Crisis

Recently I shared with my team members that this has been the most challenging year of my leadership career - the COVID-19 pandemic, financial struggles, civil unrest, political divisiveness, a recent merger, role changes, major construction, and the list goes on.

And through it all, I have had the good fortune to support a truly dedicated team of individuals who selflessly put others first and perform amazing work.

During challenging times as these, I believe what is needed is not to go by the book - after all, how many of us have lived through a global pandemic? But rather to focus on each other and doing what's right or at least our best at what we believe is right.

As Amit Ray stated, "In every crisis, doubt or confusion, take the higher path - the path of compassion, courage, understanding and love." So, what does this look like? I'm grateful to work for an organization that focused first and foremost on keeping our people safe - the safety net of an income even while furloughed, the needed equipment to do the job, and new benefits such family care reimbursement.

To meet our patient needs, we recognized that we must tap into the expertise of all our team members who quickly stepped up to be oriented to unfamiliar roles, for example, surgery nurses staffing our emergency triage

tent. This flexibility was supported through new orientation programs implemented quickly by our educators for these specific needs. Rapid identification of team members' needs and addressing these needs in a supportive manner was critical.

It also meant taking care of the whole person - wellbeing and resilience efforts included quiet rooms, healthy snacks, chaplaincy and facilitated "real talk" sessions to discuss what's on their minds. And remembering that as Jawaharlal Nehru said, "Every little thing counts in a crisis", it also meant things such as skin care tips to combat breakdowns caused by prolonged N95 mask wearing.

For me personally, it meant being available - rounding, holding all team member calls three times a week to answer any questions, and consistent communication. It meant listening to it all - their suggestions, their frustrations and their fears. And lots and lots of recognition and appreciation for all, whether frontline patient care team members or those who now found themselves thrown into remote work and feeling isolated.

I know that we'll look back at this time and evaluate what we did and most likely identify missed opportunities. And yet I know that we'll remain proud that we defined leadership to be first and foremost about making the lives of our team members better.

Lisa Just is Patient Service Area President, South Wisconsin, & President, Aurora Medical Center- Kenosha